REMARKS

Claims 1-5 stand rejected under § 103 on the basis of Suga '904, Kitamura '970 and Kanenari '603. Applicants traverse this rejection for the reasons previously given, and the following additional reasons.

The examiner asserts that it is well known to include reinforcing fibers in tire components, and cites Kitamura and Kanenari as examples. However, there still must be motivation, suggestion or some other evidence that it would have been obvious to combine the references. In this case, there is no motivation, suggestion, or other reason to combine the references. Moreover, applicants have shown unexpected results.

In Kanenari, the fibrillated short fiber used for reinforcing is a solid-phase tire-forming member (the compound sheet 16). In contrast, according to the applicant's claimed invention, the fibrillated short fiber is added in a liquid-phase adhesive sealant layer, whereby the propensity of the adhesive sealant layer to adhere to a puncture-causing matter such as a nail can be intensified to improve sealing performance. At the same time, free flowing of the sealant layer is suppressed (specification, paragraph [0009]). In other words, the claimed invention and the invention of Kanenari completely differ from each other in respect of the condition or state of the substance to which the fibrillated short fiber is additively incorporated, and accordingly the results of the invention. Thus, there is absolutely no motivation to incorporate the fibrillated short fiber of Kanenari into the adhesive sealant layer of the claimed invention.

Based on experimental results (please refer to Table 1, page 10 of the specification), the inventors of the claimed invention became aware that to add fibrillated short fiber having a specified fiber length to an adhesive sealant layer is effective in enhancing the sealing performance of the sealant layer, to result in the making of the present invention.

Kanenari contains no reference or suggestion in this respect.

The seal performance values entered in Table 1 were evaluated based on the method described in paragraph [0032]. A larger performance value represents better seal performance. Particularly when safety is taken into consideration, it is desirable that if 10 nails are driven to penetrate into the tread and then pulled out, the number of nail holes through which no air leakage occurs is 10. In Table 1, while the seal performance value is "10" for the Application example 1, that for Comparative example 1 is "0", so there lies an extremely large difference between the two examples. Also, in the instance of Comparative example 5 in which nylon short fibers (4000 μm) were compounded in the sealant composition, the seal performance value is "7", while in the instance of Comparative example 6 in which fibrillated short fibers (80 μm) were compounded in the sealant composition, the value is "8". Even when compared with such Comparative examples 5 and 6, the improvement in seal performance attained in the instance of the Application example 1 is striking. Thus, Table 1 of the present application clearly shows the unexpected result that the fibrillated short fibers specified according to the present invention can bring about in terms of seal performance improvement.

The examiner asserts that it is easy to apply the fibrillated short fiber of Kanenari to the sealant composition of Suga. However, Kanenari is completely devoid of a teaching that a specified fibrillated short fiber can improve the seal performance demonstrated by a sealant composition.

Further, while Kitamura incorporates glass short fiber as filler into an adhesive sealant layer, the glass short fiber is not fibrillated and has no softness. Therefore, even if the

glass short fiber of Kitamura is added to an adhesive sealant layer, from this the result that the adhering propensity of the adhesive sealant substance about a puncture-causing matter such as a nail is improved and the sealing performance is enhanced can never be expected. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, applicants believe that this case is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. The examiner should call applicants' attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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